DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 283 RC 006 969

AUTHOR Franc, Max E.
TITLE Communication, Administration, and Mexican-American Administrators.
PUB DATE 29 Apr 72
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Social Science Association Meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 28-29, 1972

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; Agencies; *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Problems; Educational Programs; *Federal Programs; *Mexican Americans; Minority Groups; Youth

ABSTRACT

Endeavors to incorporate Mexican Americans into the administration of social action and other governmental programs are examined in this paper. As a result of exploratory work for training Chicano youths for entry-administrator positions in such agencies, 3 areas are discussed: (1) ways in which such programs can improve communication between Mexican Americans and other public administrators; (2) techniques to identify substantive communication breakdowns in such programs; and (3) training devices for improving communication skills. The importance of empirical data in assessing the effects of treatment variables for Mexican American placement in entry-administrator positions in governmental agencies, techniques to attract these youths to public service, and a variety of other minority-oriented programs are reviewed. Also discussed are (1) differences between communication and administrative variables in these programs; (2) specific ways in which minority-oriented programs are dissimilar and similar to others; (3) identification of desirable techniques for selection and operation of minority administrators; and (4) experimental designs for tracing relationships between treatment variables and programmatic and organizational accomplishment. (NQ)

ED 076283

RECEIVED
JUN 6 1973
NMSU
E.R.I.C.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

COMMUNICATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND MEXICAN-AMERICAN ADMINISTRATORS

by

Max B. Franc

Department of Political Science

Fresno State College

Fresno, California 93710

Rocky Mountain Social Science Association

Salt Lake City, Utah

April 28-29, 1972

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

RC006969

ABSTRACT

"Communication, Administration, and Mexican-American Administrators"

Frustrations experienced by Mexican-Americans should not distract attention from possibilities for constructive programs to increase participation in public processes. The writer discusses endeavors to incorporate Mexican-Americans into administration of social action and other governmental programs. From exploratory work aimed toward training Chicano youths for entry-administrator positions in governmental agencies, the writer feels three areas are of interest: (1) ways such programs can improve communication between Mexican-American and other publics; (2) techniques to identify substantive communication breakdowns in connection with such programs; and (3) specific training devices for the purpose of improving communication skills.

Chicano leaders speak of need for "cultural protection" programs to aid the young administrator promote interests of the minority community and heighten his self-concept as an administrator. Such devices may have beneficial symbolic communication aspects in addition to some deleterious effects. The consultant must be careful about extents to which perceived communication problems involve both communication and noncommunication elements. The researcher will have to focus on identifying extents to which perceived breakdowns are associated with linguistic, cultural, and other variables.

Attention to empirical data will be important in assessment of (1) effects of treatment variables in connection with placement of young Mexican-Americans in entry-administrator positions in governmental agencies; (2) techniques to attract Chicano and other minority youths to the public service; and (3) a variety of other minority-oriented programs.

There are five specific areas that should be persued by means of organized research. Such questions pertain to the following: (1) unraveling differences between communication and administrative variables in above types of programs; (2) finding specific ways in which minority-oriented programs are dissimilar and similar

compared with other programs; (3) identifying desirable techniques for selection and preparation of minority administrators; and (4) developing experimental designs to trace relationships between (a) above kinds of variables and (b) programmatic and other kinds of accomplishment.

Mexican-Americans who attempt to secure benefits previously denied by American society experience frustrations. Some of those frustrations are occasioned by moves to participate in public processes. Chicano spokesmen who press for a greater share of public administration jobs experience frustrations in the face of a variety of obstacles. One of the latter occurs when hiring officials aver that minority applicants are welcome--but unfortunately they lack appropriate training and background.

Frustrations are experienced by Mexican-Americans when they attempt to have other dealings with public agencies. One notes, in many of those situations, suspicious use of the word "communication." One hears, for example, that there are communication breakdowns between public agencies and Mexican-American publics. Newspapers quote public figures on what are said to be communication breakdowns between government and ethnic minorities. Governmental spokesmen tell of what are said to be communication problems with blacks, Chicanos, students, and other minority publics. Frustrations of Mexican-Americans are exacerbated by seeming ironies. One irony has to do with a realization that what are said to be communication problems may actually be conflict situations accompanied by excellent communication. Ethnic minorities and other publics in those cases may actually be getting the message loud and clear.

The writer feels it will be useful for the observer of such problems to shift attention to constructive programs to increase Mexican-American involvement in public processes. The writer has worked on communication and administrative problems in public programs addressed to Spanish-speaking and black publics in California and New York. He worked with the Fresno Model Cities program to help black and Mexican-American staff deal with breakdown problems. The communication specialist may be called in to deal with what an organization considers to be communication problems.[1] As those problems are studied in greater detail, it is

---

[1] Since there is considerable communication breakdown on the subject of communication, the writer should give his definition for that term. Communication is conceived of as a process in which an intended message is gotten across, in the way intended by the sender, to the intended receiver.

sometimes found that they (1) involve broader management questions[2] and (2) raise possibilities about relationships between attitudinal variables and minority cultures.[3] The present paper will draw on above kinds of experiences, with an eye to applications for programs to increase involvement of Mexican-Americans and/or Chicanos.[4] Concentration will be on ways of incorporating those publics into public administration processes.

Some General Observations in Connection with Minority-Oriented Programs

As a political scientist who endeavors to focus on the communication function, the writer will undertake to combine notions from public administration and political science with concepts from the study of communication. Attention might be given to two major areas of present-day experience: (1) minority-oriented programs administered for the most part by minority personnel, and (2) endeavors, in more general governmental and business programs, to incorporate minority administrators. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to argue which of those approaches will be more useful in the long run.

---

[2] Dratek and Haas have done laboratory simulation work in which perceived stresses seem less important than long-term problems of a noncommunication nature built into the system. See Thomas E. Dratek and J. Eugene Haas, "Laboratory Simulation of Organizational Stress," American Sociological Review, Vol. 34, No. 2, (April, 1969), p. 223.

[3] The writer goes in more detail into possibilities of culturally related attitudes and opinions in "Minority Attitudes and Opinions that Have Impacts on Administration of Minority-Oriented Programs" (Paper read at Pacific Chapter American Association for Public Opinion Research, Asilomar, California, March 4, 1972).

[4] Although participants in the Section of the Conference for which the present paper is prepared hardly need the following called to their attention, a terminological distinction should be made for the benefit of other readers. For purposes of the present paper, "Mexican-American" will be used broadly. "Chicano" will refer to Movimiento leaders, now usually youthful--in spirit if not always in age--who feel that relatively direct means must be taken to advance the people of La Raza. Rightly or wrongly, the writer feels there is not agreement at the present time, among people in the United States of Mexican descent, concerning use of those terms.

a range of opinion segments. The broad aim of these endeavors is to pull together consensus regarding desirable next steps for initiating a series of pilot programs. Later research will address identification of communication variables and analysis of their impacts. Bilingual aspects of such programs make such endeavors especially interesting in communication terms. Three foci are suggested at the present time: (1) How can such efforts to prepare entrants into governmental administration improve communication between Mexican-American and other publics? (2) What are substantive communication breakdowns in connection with such programs, and how can such breakdowns be identified and overcome? and (3) What should be the nature of training, in those programs, for the purpose of improving communication skills?

For the purpose of laying groundwork for a series of pilot programs, the writer feels time is well spent surveying a variety of opinion segments from the Mexican-American community. Some Mexican-Americans feel that preparation of minority entry-administrators should take place primarily within the framework of regular public administration training programs. Others feel that substantial departures should be made, centering on on-the-job internship experiences. In speaking with minority representatives about plans for such programs, one notes that those spokesmen make frequent reference to need for dealing with "communication problems." Representatives of different segments of Mexican-American opinion are not in agreement about extents or kinds of modifications to be included in programs for preparation of minority entry-administrators. One concern that is expressed by most Chicano spokesmen addresses possible loss, on the part of the young entry administrator, of Mexican-American cultural values. Those spokesmen advise the writer to build in protections in the form of in-service programs directed first to the young Chicago administrator, and then possibly also to non-Chicano agency personnel with whom that person will work. Chicano leaders appear to be in broad agreement that such

---

[6] Experiences in a program now being undertaken by Juan D. Hernández and Arnold Martinez, Jr. may have broader applications. The writer is indebted to those gentlemen for some ideas in the present paper. See "Employment and Career Opportunities for the Mexican-American Group." A Project Prepared for the Department of Social Welfare (Sacramento: State of California Human Relations Agency, 1970).

devices will help preserve Mexican-American cultural values, thereby aiding the young administrator (1) further interests of the minority community and (2) strengthen his self-image so he can be an effective administrator.

The writer feels Chicano leaders are in broad agreement with staff of programs administered for the most part by minority personnel. Both groups express strong feelings that communication skills will overcome major problems connected with the role of minorities in public programs. The term "communication problems" appears to be a broad umbrella used by both groups and seems to relate to a variety of frustrations. Devices of a symbolic communication nature appear to have particular significance. Chicano leaders express concern over the vendido, the Mexican-American who is looked upon as a sellout to the Anglo establishment. This and other concerns may indicate feelings of threat of acculturation. Even Chicano spokesmen who admit to personal assimilation into the majoritarian culture express concern over loss, on the part of the young Chicano entry-administrator, of his culture.

One occasion for a communication specialist's coming into contact with a poverty program originates with his being called in for the purpose of helping staff develop techniques and skills to deal with "communication problems." The communication consultant working in the area of preparation of young minority entry-administrators hopefully will endeavor to improve the latter's skills in communication, organizing, and the like. That consultant will have to be careful to identify extents to which breakdowns in those areas involve communication as against non-communication elements. There is difficulty, for example, in knowing precisely what steps should be taken to help the young Mexican-American entry-administrator overcome problems associated with conflicts, insecurities, and lack of identity. We do not at present have hard data about relationships between (1) such steps and (2) indices by which there is accomplishment of organizational objectives, gains in benefits to minority communities, or growth on the part of the individual entry-administrator.

The writer feels that symbolic communication devices will constitute a fruitful area of study, especially in connection with what were cited as desires for "cultural protection" programs.[7] Exploration of such devices seems desirable since they presumably express sincere feelings about perceived needs. Such devices may or may not be found to have substantive benefits in the long run. The major benefits in the short run may be in symbolic communication terms, in the sense that those devices will allay uneasiness and clear the way for other constructive endeavors. One approach can be to introduce training in communication skills by tying the latter to perceived features of minority cultures. Emphasis can then shift to dealing with broader problems in communication and public administration.

It appears that the designer of programs to prepare minority administrators for greater participation in social action programs will have to be open to new ways of combining communication skills with those of organizing, problem solving, and conflict resolution. It should be instructive to find data about specific functions of communication skills in programs with bilingual characteristics, especially in preparation of Spanish-speaking publics for participation in governmental processes. The researcher will have to identify extents to which communication breakdowns in those endeavors are associated with linguistic, cultural, and other variables. From the writer's experience with the Mexican culture and Spanish language, it seems that an important consideration will have to do with ways in which trainers in those programs exhibit genuine feeling and sympathy for the Mexican idiom of the Spanish language.

---

[7] Stated goals of Hernández' nad Martinez' Sacramento project include "Assuring the availability of job opportunities for the Mexican-American in public welfare; developing culturally appropriate methods of recruitment and selection of Mexican-Americans; developing orientation and training of the newly hired Mexican-American employee...." Ibid., p. 1.

Focus on Research

The writer is working to secure grant support for salaries to place young Mexican-Americans in two- to three-year entry-administrator positions in governmental agencies. Research design will be an important consideration in planning that program. Attitude and opinion questionnaires should be useful, for example, to assess change effects that may be associated with treatment variables. Such a design might include cells based on ideological orientation of young Mexican-American entry-administrators. Cells can be arranged according to activists, moderates, and people who are perceived as vendidos ("sellouts"). Effects of critical treatment variables should have applications for other programs to involve neighborhood publics in community organization processes. The writer has been working with a Chicano graduate student who focuses, by means of an attitude and opinion questionnaire, on ways a young Mexican-American administrator can involve community publics in planning phases of a minority-oriented public agency.[8]

Attention to empirical data will also be important to assess techniques to attract young people, including Mexican-Americans and other minorities, to the public service. It is difficult at this point to identify appeals that are most effective in opening young people to alternative courses of action in this connection. This is complicated by general disaffections, on the part of young people today, in the face of a variety of social problems. The writer also has a State of California Innovative Research Grant under which a team of students is writing brochures directed to a variety of youth publics. A main theme in their efforts is desirability of pursuing constructive, alternative courses of action for the

---

[8]Joseph R. Rocha, "Mexican-Americans in Government: A Study of Attitudinal Differentiations within the Mexican-American Community in the Implementation of Action Programs to Incorporate Mexican-Americans into the Planning Process." (unpublished Master's thesis, Fresno State College, Fresno, 1972).

purpose of making changes from within.[9] A group of Chicano students is working on drafts of brochures addressed to what those writers perceive and define as ideological subgroups of Mexican-American youth. Those activities will presumably have greater meaning as there is follow-up measurement of attitudinal and behavioral responses of young people who are exposed to such materials.

Empirically based research will be important for assessment of a variety of minority-oriented programs other than above undertakings to attract and prepare young Mexican-Americans for participation in government. Some of those programs involve La Raza, for example, as more young Mexican-Americans are trained in empirical methods of the behavioral sciences. The writer is not saying that such changes are desirable or will necessarily occur. The point is that minority leaders should be ready to identify and deal with a variety of change possibilities, whatever directions the latter will take. The writer is of the view that changes will be most useful when they are initiated by minority representatives and kept under their control.

Questions may be raised about desirable roles for the Ango social scientist who wishes to help managers of such programs deal directly with attitudes and opinions of minority publics. The writer feels that that social scientist should focus on helping minority people make their own improvements from within. As minority staff in those programs are in a better position to use social science

---

[9] In the grant application, the writer goes into subjects like relating such materials to a regional public administration training program oriented both to needs of governmental agencies and minority publics. The reader recognizes that the above idea that a young person works most effectively for change when he works from within is not without controversy. Many minority youths, including those who may have most to offer such programs, would not agree. Their argument is that the young person and the minority group have too much to lose in this process. Compromises and adjustments, in their view, lead to "becoming the enemy"--as Pogo would put it. The writer feels that careful research into attitudes, behaviors, and programmatic changes associated with various alternatives taken by young people will have most to say about relative merits of such arguments and counter-arguments.

methods to identify and deal with attitudinal and behavioral variables, this should be accompanied by greater attention to real-life characteristics of community clientele publics. The attitude and opinion questionnaire referred to earlier in connection with Joseph R. Rocha's master's thesis is felt to be a step in that direction.[10] It should be useful to get similar empirical data about consensus-building techniques by which Mexican-American administrators work within traditional and activista frameworks simultaneously.

Specific Areas Needing Research

The reader has been presented with what was cited as one chief way of increasing Mexican-American participation in public administration programs: preparation of young Mexican-American entry-administrators. At this point it might be useful to outline some broad questions that should be pursued in further organized research on communication and administrative aspects of such programs. The following outline will focus on common questions emerging from above observations.

1. Relationships between communication and administrative variables. A first question has to do with unraveling of differences between communication and administrative variables in above types of programs. We should first work to isolate what administrators in connection with such programs conceive of as communication as against administrative functions. A start in this direction can be made by attempting to identify what both minority and other administrators agree upon as instances of communication breakdown.[11] This will help provide

---

[10] Rocha, op. cit.

[11] Such techniques are discussed in greater detail in a paper for a workshop on the communication audit. Max B. Franc, "Assessment of Attitude and Opinion Change Effects of the Communication Audit" (Paper read at international Communication Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 19, 1972).

a base for appraising whether minority administrators overestimate efficacies of communication technique. Answers to such questions should be useful for finding effective ways of training such administrators in improvement of communication and administrative skills.

2. Differencies and similarities. Another question has to do with ways in which such programs are dissimilar and similar compared with other public programs. It will be interesting to find specific ways in which problems faced by the chief administrator of a poverty agency are different from or basically similar to those of other managers.[12] Minority administrators often allude, for example, to problems of time management. Staff members in minority-oriented programs often are selected for community representation purposes rather than management skills. Difficulties with respect to planning and use of time seem to be connected with one major area of breakdown.

At present it is difficult to assess whether attitudes relating to above subjects are also ethnically connected.[13] Beyond examples of problems of lack of administrative background, one notes that minority administrators, for example Mexican-Americans, express dislike for pressures to adopt "establishment techniques." It is difficult to say whether such views reflect real dissimilarities or similarities related to deeper cultural values. One notes that time management, deadlines, target dates, etc. are especial objects of scorn in these connections. Minority administrators also express dissatisfactions with the "establishment's" desires to get things on paper. Disaffection centers on what is viewed as overly demanding

---

[12] Becker and Geer discuss general problems relating to transfer between cultural and organizational roles. Howard S. Becker and Blanche Geer, "Latent Culture: A Note on the Theory of Latent Social Roles," Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 2 (September, 1960), pp. 305-13.

[13] In the paper referred to in Footnote 3, the writer goes into five areas that may be pursued in view of possibilities of culturally related attitudes and opinions: (1) notions regarding time and time management; (2) importance of media skills, symbols, criteria, and standards; (3) responsibilities toward community as against other publics; (4) relative importance of the quantitative vs. the qualitative; and (5) orientation toward word-oriented rules and forms.

use of symbols, criteria, standards, and the like. Both the consultant and the researcher have to be careful about taking such administrators' initial reactions at face value.[14] Future research will have to work toward pinning down (a) relative importance of attitudinal factors that may be connected with minority cultures, and (b) effectiveness of use of media skills, organizing skills, and the like.

The writer suspects that linguistic variables associated with ethnic- and minority-oriented referents are not key elements in communication breakdown in administration of minority-oriented programs. Above variables having to do with deeper value and cultural differences may have more important impacts in such breakdowns. This might involve attitudinal and cultural differences that get expressed in the form of conflicts over need for organizing, being on time, structuring according to word-oriented rules and regulations, and the like.

3. Preparation of administrators from minority sources. Above problems in representing interests of Mexican-American publics point up need for basic research on questions about selection and preparation of minority administrators. Until there is accurate measurement of impacts of cultural and other differences on outputs from minority-oriented programs, the behavioral science researcher must question whether effects of such variables are correctly assessed. Data will tell us best whether bilingual considerations associated with Mexican-American publics translate into attitudinal differences that have impacts on programmatic and individual performance. "Cultural protection" devices and other moves that may have symbolic communication values will have to be studied in terms of such accomplishment. Once those kinds of relationships are measured, later explorations can be made to gear such input skills to more direct accomplishments of organizational and programmatic objectives.

---

[14] The writer had one experience with a list of 12 editing rules. Staff members alternated between annoyance at the concept of having such rules, and satisfactions from applying those rules in team editing projects. From an initial position of dissatisfaction toward the idea of having such rules, those administrators moved to one of saying they now make extensive use of the 12 editing rules in completing job assignments.

4. Relationships with organizational accomplishment. Whether looking to Mexican-American socialization problems or incorporation of ethnic minorities into public administration programs, one research question has broadest meaning. This has to do with relationships between (a) above kinds of variables and (b) output indices for organizational and programmatic accomplishment. Experimental research designs should be the most productive approach in this connection. It was mentioned earlier that the writer plans to look for effects of experimental treatments with cells for young administrators of varying ideological backgrounds. It should be instructive to identify attitudinal modifications associated with a number of treatment variables in such training programs. Effects of experimental variables in "cultural protection" devices should be of particular interest. Variations and changes experienced by all participants, trainees and trainers, can in turn be measured against a variety of output indices.

In view of above questions and problems relating to communication and administrative difficulties in ethnic-oriented programs, the researcher must, in short, focus on impacts measured in terms of organizational and programmatic outputs. The writer submits that only with that emphasis will we get effective evaluation of new endeavors for incorporating Mexican-Americans, blacks, and other ethnic minorities into governmental programs. Hard data concerning effects of such treatment variables will help us answer a number of puzzling questions about communication, administration, and Mexican-American administrators.